

THE
ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE
SCHOOL COMMITTEE

OF THE
TOWN OF CANTON,

FOR THE YEAR ENDING FEBRUARY 28, 1879.

BOSTON :
WILLIAM BENSE, PRINTER, 35 CONGRESS STREET,
1879.

THE
ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE
SCHOOL COMMITTEE

OF THE
TOWN OF CANTON,

FOR THE YEAR ENDING FEBRUARY 28, 1879.

BOSTON :
WILLIAM BENSE, PRINTER, 35 CONGRESS STREET,
1879.

REPORT.

FINANCIAL.

The appropriation by the town for teaching, fuel and care of School-rooms, was	- - - - -	\$10,300 00
Received from State, (School Fund)	- - -	251 37 .
“ “ County (Dog Licenses,)	- -	456 17
		<hr/>
	Total,	\$11,007 54
Amount paid for teaching,	- - - - -	9,735 00
Fuel and care of rooms,	- - - - -	1,309 49
		<hr/>
Excess over appropriation	- - - - -	36 95
The appropriation for repairs, incidentals, supplies, and supervision was	- - - - -	\$2,700 00
Expended for same,	- - - - -	2,756 93
		<hr/>
Excess over appropriation,	- - - - -	56 93

SCHOOL ACCOMODATION.

As foreshadowed in their last annual report, the committee re-organized the schools in Districts No. 1 and 6 by establishing one Grammar School in the High School building for the advanced pupils in both Districts, and organizing an Intermediate and Primary department in each of the two houses left. The necessity for some measure of relief in these two Districts will be seen when it is stated that the whole number

of pupils in No. 1 was 102, and in No. 6, 118. To provide for these pupils where they were, involved the employment of two assistant teachers, who must work to disadvantage in the same room with the principals. These rooms were already inconveniently full with no prospect of any permanent decrease. It was felt that satisfactory results could not be reasonably expected from such a course, and the number of pupils in No. 6 who were of the proper grade to be transferred to the new grammar school being only fourteen, it was decided that the interests of the town would be best served by the reorganization mentioned above. While the cost to the town of maintaining these schools as now organized is less than before, although one additional teacher is employed, the improvement in the classification of the pupils rendered possible by this step, is of great value to the schools. The Committee desire in this connection to acknowledge the valuable services of Mr. James Dunbar, who has been steadily at work in the new Grammar School, as an assistant, since September last and without pay. They also desire to recognize the services of the members of the training class.

SUPERVISION.

Under this head in our last annual report, after reciting the difficulties in the way of producing satisfactory results and alluding to the inadequacy of half-time supervision, we wrote as follows :

Is it reasonable to expect good results from appliances thus limited? No more reasonable than to expect good mechanical work to be produced by any establishment, one half of whose workmen are apprentices, and all are employed upon new and untried work, without the constant supervision of a skilled master mechanic. What is true of our factories and workshops is true of our schools. What is true economy in the one case is true economy in the other. What we

spend each year upon our schools far exceeds what we spend for any other single purpose. It certainly behooves us to strive to obtain the very best return for this expenditure. To do less than this, is, so far as we come short of it, to waste our money. What, then, is the remedy for this state of affairs? The answer has already been anticipated. It is the constant application of skilled supervision. Your Committee have neither the time nor the ability to do this work. * * * If done at all, and we have tried to show how important it is that it should be done, it must be done by a superintendent who can devote his whole time and energy to this work. Then followed our extract from the Report of the State Board of Education, as follows :

"The employment of an experienced, intelligent leader, responsible for results, is as necessary in school affairs, as it is, and is acknowledged to be, in all other organizations and occupations ; a leader who shall spend all his time and strength in looking after the interest of the schools, and who shall be constantly devising new means for their improvement, so that there may be an adequate return for what is expended."

Having thus clearly stated our position, we asked the town to make the necessary provision for full time supervision, and a sufficient sum was appropriated for that purpose. Mr. Geo. I. Aldrich was shortly afterward elected to the position of Superintendent at a salary of \$1300 per year, and assumed the duties of the office May 20th. In his report he states that he devoted the remaining portion of the term to so acquainting himself with the situation as to enable him to begin his work with advantage with the opening of the fall term. Seven months have since elapsed, and now at the close of the year it seems proper that we should look at the results obtained. The time is a very limited one in which to show any marked results, as most people will be ready to admit, and yet we see no cause for discouragement either in what has already been accomplished or in the promise of the future. And, first, the children love to go to school and

manifest an eagerness to learn, when there, such as has never been seen before. While this is specially true of the younger children, it applies to all ages, and is in itself a strong indication that in the method we are pursuing we are on the right track. Certainly there can be no more important factor in the advancement of a pupil than the interest he feels in the work laid down for him to do. Second, the teachers have taken hold of the work with earnestness, and pursued it with fidelity, and find greater satisfaction than ever before in what they are able to accomplish. Third, a renewed, or rather an awakened interest has been manifested on the part of the parents and friends, leading to more frequent visits to the schools, by which both teacher and pupil are greatly encouraged. The number of visits made to all the schools between Sept. 1st and March 1st was 1323. Fourth, while the progress made in all the studies pursued will compare favorably with that of any former period of equal length, that made in writing in every grade is something almost marvellous. Fifth, the subject of morals and manners has found a larger place in the work of the school room, to the manifest advantage of all concerned. Sixth, without additional expense, a training class for teachers has been established and some promising teachers developed who have rendered valuable service to the town as helpers in the schools in consideration of the experience thus obtained. We feel that the promise of a year ago has been more than fulfilled in the results thus far. Now what shall we say for the future? Briefly stated, the task we have set before us to accomplish is, that the children of our schools shall at the age of say twelve years, have a better knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic, than they now have at fifteen. To accomplish such a work as this must of course take time, as only from those children who have had the advantage of proper training from the beginning, can such a result be expected. If, however, the Committee are supported by the town in the work they have undertaken, we may expect to see a constant

and more and more rapid improvement through all the grades and in all the various studies from this time forth, and we ought to be satisfied with nothing less. We base these prognostications of the future not only upon what has already been achieved in this town, but, fortunately, we have at our command the successful experience of a town where the same appliances have been at work for four years. In the school report of that town at the end of one year's trial of a superintendent we find these words :

"At the last annual meeting of the town, the School Committee were authorized to employ a Superintendent of schools. * * * The intellectual culture, not less than the financial interest of the people, in short, demanded this reform. This conviction had been forced upon the Committee by long observation and experience. It had commended itself to the good sense of the town. It was determined to try the experiment. * * * It soon became manifest to the Committee, that this measure was likely to be productive of the benefits anticipated by its friends ; but it also became plain that its full result could not be wholly realized in one year."

From the next annual report of the same town we quote as follows :

"Nearly two years have elapsed since the town voted to employ a Superintendent of Public Schools. * * * Our experience now enables us to form an accurate judgment as to its tendency and value. During the discussion for its adoption, the strongest reasons urged for thus supplementing the general direction by a Committee with a single, constant supervision, were, firstly, that the exclusive attention of a competent educator would be likely to secure greatly increased literary progress through the adoption of improved methods and a more complete organization. And, secondly, that the very large sum of money annually appropriated by the town for the support of schools could thus be more systematically applied and more responsibly husbanded. Is the town now enjoying either or both of these promised benefits? * * * We certainly think that a casual observer visiting our schools to-day, after an interval of three years, would be struck by the marked improvement apparent. * * * Setting out with a comprehensive and accurate classification of all

the school children, upon a scheme embracing the whole town, and co-ordinating each department in one compact plan, each teacher was assigned his appropriate place and combined in a single effort to attain a common and concerted result. Thus unity of action and economy of labor have been secured."

At the end of another year we find the Committee using the following language :

"The School Committee, in their report submitted to the town for the three years last past, deemed it proper to explain in some detail the methods of teaching and supervision which have recently been adopted by the town. They have, from time to time expressed their growing confidence in the efficacy and success of these methods. One year ago they felt justified in pronouncing a final and unanimous verdict in their favor. They can now only renew and reinforce their favorable judgment. The improvement of the educational system of the town has been steady throughout the year, and a really surprising progress has been effected in the schools. The same scheme of constant and scientific superintendence which had heretofore produced such valuable and remarkable results, has continued to bring forth, month by month, its matured fruits. So that to-day we can sincerely say that we believe our schools will compare favorably with any in the State. Indeed, it is the opinion of some members of the Committee who have had occasion to make an extended observation of similar schools in adjoining states, that there is nowhere about us a more promising and productive method in use."

And finally, in their report just issued, they sum up the results as follows :

" * * * We are getting a greater actual value per dollar expended than we did last year or the year before, or, indeed, in any year known to your Committee. * * * We believe there is no surer token that your children are working advantageously than to see that they are working cheerfully, intelligently and happily. * * * The general conclusion which we would deduce from all our previous reports and multiplied observation and study, and which we desire to impress upon the town, is that the people of Quincy have reaped and are gathering to-day a harvest of greater volume and value from their adoption of the system of superintend-

ence than the Committee ventured either to anticipate or promise."

We make ^{no} ~~our~~ apology for these lengthy quotations from the reports of Quincy. The people of Canton want light upon this important question, and in the absence of any such prolonged experience of their own, may well seek light from the experience of others.

Considered specially in its economic relations there is much that may be said in favor of the plan now being pursued. The reports above quoted claim a better result at a reduced cost. Probably none will dispute the economy of doing in five or six years what has hitherto required eight, even though the work be no better done than before. If better results are obtained in the shorter time, as we trust will be the case, the economy of the measure by which these results are brought about would seem to need no further argument. In this connection the following facts are not without significance. Brookline appropriated for schools for 1877-8 \$27 84 per child between the ages of five and fifteen years; Milton, \$26 81; Dedham, \$17 59; Needham, \$16 78; Walpole, \$16 18; Norwood, \$15 62; Hyde Park, \$14 48; Wrentham, \$13 96; Quincy, \$13 94; Holbrook, \$13 62; Medfield, \$13 02; Weymouth, \$12 84; Randolph, \$12 48; and Canton for 1878-9, including the Superintendent's salary of \$1300, \$12 39. Applying the test of economy we should naturally expect to find the schools of Brookline and Milton far superior to those of Quincy. And yet it is believed that no one acquainted with the facts will admit any superiority in the schools of these two towns over those in Quincy, where about one half the amount per child was expended for school purposes, but where there has been for four years an application of the principle of constant, skilled, and scientific supervision. So far as our own town is concerned, the problem demanding a solution at our hands would seem to be this: how can Canton, with an appropriation per child of less

than one half of that of Brookline or Milton and lower than most of the adjoining towns, secure results in its schools that shall be equal to the best. We believe that this can be done in our town but in one way, and looking at the result in Quincy we believe that way lies in the very direction in which we are now moving. A good teacher will teach a good school, but the best of teachers may be helped by skilful supervision. But the best teachers command high salaries and high salaries in Canton are out of the question. What we need then is just that persistent training that shall make good teachers from the material that we have at hand, and at a cost within our reach.

The welfare of our schools touches very closely the dearest interests of our citizens. Many a parent who has nothing else to bequeath to his children will hesitate before giving up his opportunity to give them the best education the town can afford. And he will not be satisfied with that false economy, which while it reduces the immediate cost of our schools, must necessarily greatly impair their usefulness. The plan we have adopted is on trial before the town. The short time during which it has been in active operation, while furnishing no reason for which it should be condemned, does furnish, it seems to us, even to those who doubt its expediency, a good reason for giving it a further trial. And with this end in view, we confidently look to the citizens of the town to continue their support to the work we have undertaken.

ESTIMATES FOR 1879.

The Committee estimate the expenses for 1879 as follows :

For teachers' salaries,	-	-	-	-	\$10,000 00
For fuel and care of school-rooms,	-	-			1,000 00

11,000 00

Estimating the School Fund and dog license at 700 00

We have a balance to be appropriated for teach-

ing, fuel and care of school-rooms of - - 10,300 00

For repairs, incidentals and supplies, including \$1300 for salary of Superintendent, - - - - 2,700 00

In the above estimate no provision is made for any assistants in No. 1 Grammar or in Miss Silloway's Primary. The sum of \$300 could be judiciously expended in this direction, and for some part of the year at least an assistant will be a necessity in Miss Silloway's room.

In conclusion we bespeak your careful attention to the report of the Superintendent, which follows.

J. MASON EVERETT,
J. W. WATTLES,
JESSE FENNO,
GEO. F. SUMNER,
THOMAS LONERGAN,
ARTHUR C. KOLLOCK,
FRANK R. BIRD,
V. J. MESSINGER,

School Committee.



In Memoriam.

THIS community was startled on the morning of October 22, by the announcement of the sudden death of ISAAC HORTON, who had rendered an unbroken service of eighteen years upon the School Committee.

At the meeting of the board, following this event, the following resolutions were adopted :

WHEREAS, it has pleased our Heavenly Father to remove from our midst Isaac Horton, after a service of eighteen years upon this board,—

Resolved, That while we, his fellow members of the School Committee, bow with resignation to the Divine will, we nevertheless mourn his sudden departure, and will ever cherish his memory, as that of a true and steadfast personal friend and a conscientious and zealous guardian of the interests of the schools.

Resolved, That we tender our heartfelt sympathy to his bereaved family in their sudden affliction,—that a copy of these resolutions be forwarded to them, and that they be printed in the *Canton Journal*.

REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT.

To the School Committee of Canton:

IN accordance with the rules of the Board, I present the following as my first annual report. Assuming the duties of my present position on May 20, 1878, I devoted the remaining six weeks of the term to gaining an acquaintance with scholars and teachers. I desired to learn as much of our schools as the limited time would allow, in order that in the work of the ensuing fall, just such steps might be taken as the condition and needs of the schools should demand. No decided changes were attempted, therefore, during the summer term. Our real work commenced Sept. 1st, and we have had, consequently, up to the present time twenty-eight school weeks,—a short time in which to show results, when we consider the decided changes in methods which have been made. While I am certain that we have made an advance in the right direction, I am equally aware that we have taken only a single step. Time,—years of labor and waiting,—is necessary in order that teachers may become thoroughly conversant with their work, and that results may completely justify the new departure. In view of the discussion awakened by the recent action of the committee, I have deemed it advisable to state, as briefly and clearly as possible, some of the points in which our schools are lacking, the changes which have been attempted, and the reasons on which these changes rest. Our American children enter school when from five to seven years of age. A very small

percentage of those entering, remain eight years in the elementary schools, and then enter the high school. Another small portion remain long enough to complete the grammar school course. By far the larger number of our children, however, end their school life when eleven or twelve years of age. My small experience has led me to believe that, considering the expenditure of time and money, our schools in general afford us a very inadequate return, and I am more and more confirmed in that view. There seems to be a great lack of economy, not so much in the expenditure of money, as in the employment of bad methods. Such a lack of economy as would lead a wise business man to inquire its cause, and seek for a remedy. That after eight or nine years of constant study in our common schools, select pupils should show an amount of acquirement no greater than the examination for admission to the High School discloses, indicates that something is lacking to the complete efficiency of the system. The closest observers everywhere lament the scanty equipment with which we send scholars from our Grammar Schools. If this be true of those that complete the course, what must be the condition of the much larger number whose whole school life consists of but four or five years? There is no lack in the things which we attempt to do. The trouble is, that while we were doing a few things but poorly, we have gone on adding to the number of things attempted. The result is easy to be seen. Every grammar master laments the condition of the children as they come into his hands. He finds it difficult to discover anything which they really know, anything which they can really do well. As a result he is obliged, if he does his duty, to spend his time in building up the weak places, in doing work which should have been done in the preceding years, instead of doing the work which properly belongs to his grade. For instance, in our highest grammar classes, when scholars have been in school for eight or nine years, we find them still

learning to read, still learning to write. We find these two branches pursued all this time as ends, and not very successfully pursued at that. With proper management, I am convinced that this work can be done in five years better than it is now done in eight; that in five years most of the *teaching* of reading and writing can be completed, so that after that time they may be the means of gaining further knowledge, rather than the specific ends which teachers must pursue. The same features appear in the other branches viz.: that the time and labor and money expended are out of all proportion to the results attained. Now, as I have said, statistics show that the great mass of our children leave school when eleven or twelve years old. The necessities of the parent in numerous cases compel this; the child in many instances is only too ready to leave the school room. He regards "going to work" as an escape from a place he has never loved. We are most emphatically called upon therefore, to give children the foundations of a good education by the time they reach the age of twelve. Every child may rightly demand this at our hands, but the call is most imperative from those who are compelled at this age to leave the school room forever. I have not hesitated to say that we very often fail of accomplishing this in the case of children who remain through the grammar school course. By the elements of a good education, I mean the ability to read ordinary English intelligently, to write well, and to work accurately and rapidly in the simpler operations of arithmetic. Regarding this as our chiefest duty, I have devoted the largest share of my labors to our primary schools. We must accomplish vastly more in the first four years of school life than we do at present, if we are to reach the result just named. If this result can be accomplished in four years, it is perfectly evident that the remaining four years of the grammar school course can be employed in doing well those things which now we either do miserably or

else postpone altogether. This end can only be reached then by means of

BETTER TEACHING.

Few teachers make any study of methods. The ordinary preparation for teaching consists in acquiring a certain amount of knowledge, which is in turn to be communicated to the child. Tradition, in this matter, hangs like a millstone about our necks. We are too often content to do in the school room just what the teacher did when we were young. As a result of this, things are constantly taking place in our schools which are positively injurious to the child. The bare fact that a thing has been done in a certain way in the past, is no more a reason that it should always be done in the same way, than that we are bound to break up the ground with a crooked stick, simply because men formerly did so. Sciences are progressive. Fresh discoveries often cause old positions to be abandoned as untenable. What we have regarded as statements of truth, are instantly cast aside as further investigation discloses their incorrectness. What reason can be given that as the train advances, the science of education should stand halting, unable to maintain the correctness of some of its dogmas, unwilling to take advantage of the new light which constantly offers itself? The first step toward good teaching is the intelligent employment of correct methods. I shall undertake presently to say something of these, in the hope that they may commend themselves to the good sense of our community.

ATTENDANCE.

The matter of attendance will never be satisfactorily settled until our school rooms are made such pleasant, happy places for the children, that they enter them with joy and leave them with regret. The percentage of attendance may be improved by various devices, the offering of prizes, the publishing of rolls of honor, by encouraging a proper rivalry between scholars, but I think I point out above the only sure

remedy for poor attendance. The fact that so many boys and girls, bright and active everywhere else, seem dullards in the school room, and early acquire a distaste for school and all its employments, speaks volumes as to our mismanagement. In our schools, we suffer not so much from the irregularity of those whose names constantly appear on the registers, as from the non-attendance of a large number of children, who have grown up to prefer the shop, the factory or the street to the company of their mates in the school room. By proper management we can largely diminish this evil. Parents are generally ready to make sacrifices for their children, and when they shall see them earnest and happy in their school work, in love with the teacher and the school room, I am sure that nothing but the direst necessity will lead them to take them from school. In this connection I would again urge upon parents, and all friends of education, the importance of frequent visits to the school room. The effect upon both teachers and scholars is most happy. As they perceive that they are not working apart from the world, but that the public appreciates every good thing that is done, they are led to redoubled exertions for success. The community owes this duty to itself, it owes it to the children. Where the public manifests the liveliest interest in its schools, there the best schools are ever to be found. All intelligent criticism of our work will be heartily welcomed. Only by means of frequent visits can criticism be either intelligent or fair, and I present this as an additional reason why our citizens should make themselves familiar with the every day work of the school room.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS.

I know of no greater contrast than the one existing between the primary school as it generally is found and the primary school as it may be made: in the one is deadly torpor, in the other constant activity: in the one are dull, staring faces, in the other eyes dancing with life and beaming.

with intelligence: in the one is the stupidity which results from doing nothing, in the other the vigor and keenness which results from the constant exercise of the child's own powers. During its first four years, the child's acquisitions of knowledge are wonderful. Constantly employing its senses, the little one compels everything about it, to add to its daily increasing store. Every waking hour contributes something to its idea of form, of space, of sound, of color. Constant activity has been the rule of its whole life, constant study of its surroundings its never ending employment. What a change does its first day in the ancient primary school bring about? In place of its former activity, dull wearisome hours on a hard bench; nothing for hands to do, nothing for feet to do, nothing for voice to do, and, after a few hours, nothing for eyes to do. Once or twice in the day to be called to the teacher's side, and made to stare at a page covered with black characters utterly meaningless to a child or anybody else. Almost anything is better than that the little ones should sit hour after hour unoccupied, and I am happy to think that we have done something to make the early school years of our children at least as happy as their former life had been. I have heard it remarked that while the work of our primary schools seemed admirable for little children, it would not do to apply the same methods to advanced classes. Such critics beg the whole question by assuming that we propose to treat children of all ages in precisely the same way. There are two classes of individuals employed in the school room; the first class "keep school," the second class are *teachers*. In the arrangement of our work, we must pay close attention to the age and capabilities of the child. Sticking close to the statement that *nothing is ever to be done for the scholar, which he can possibly do for himself*, no fear need be felt lest the teachers shall do all the work, or lest the faculties of pupils be not exercised to the full extent which is proper. Those who

“keep school” can do nothing but assign tasks and hear the same recited. This is but a small portion of the *teacher's* work; a portion which the teacher will not neglect, but which belongs to the department of instruction, rather than to that of education.

PRIMARY READING.

A radical change has been made in the teaching of reading. I found the teachers making use exclusively of the Alphabet Method, a method which is neither economical nor founded on correct principles. On this subject, Dr. Thomas Hill, ex-president of Harvard University, remarks, “A man who has lived through a course of bad diet, and inattention to the laws of health, is apt to regard attention to such matters as a mark of effeminacy; and, in like manner, those whose love of literature has not been quenched, and whose power to see truth has not been wholly blinded by the ordinary mode of learning to read, suppose that there is no urgent need for improvement. He who will reflect, however, seriously upon the absurdities of English orthography, and upon the gravity with which those absurdities are usually introduced to the child as reasonable things, must perceive that such instruction has an injurious effect upon the child's mental powers, and upon his love of truth. The boy may survive it, as he survived in olden days compression of swathing bands, drenching with herb-teas and drugging with cordials; I will even allow that in the case of great native vigor of mind, the injurious effect may be small; but it is always pernicious, and in the case of persons of small intellectual ability disastrous.” As a matter of fact the A B C method has been condemned by all leading authorities for many years. In its place has been put the

WORD METHOD.

Every idea has two signs, the spoken and the written sign. The former is first learned by the child. It is learned as a whole. The child is unconscious that this spoken sign is

made up of parts. In this way, during its first five years, the child acquires words very rapidly and easily. He takes each instantly as a unit, and each stands for an idea which he has previously gained. These two things the idea and its spoken sign, are inseparable in the child's mind. Now the written sign is but a trifle more complex than the spoken sign and should be acquired in precisely the same way. It should come to the child as a whole, by means of no analysis whatever, and should answer these two conditions when it is perfectly known. 1st, when seen it should be instantly recognized. 2nd, it should never be seen without recalling the idea for which it stands. The word method then proposes to continue the practice and experience of the first five years of life.

In connection with reading, writing is taken up on the child's first day in school. It is found that they are a mutual help. The little people copy words from the board, and by this means, fix their forms in the mind, while at the same time they are learning to write. The child spends four or five months in reading from the board, and at the end of that time is ready for the First Reader. Two or three readers of this grade may be read during the first year. Any one who sees the eagerness with which our children in the lowest primary schools approach a reading exercise, can hardly fail to perceive its great advantage over the old, drawling, ding-dong method.

Careful examination shows that but little intelligent reading is done in the school room. A large share of it is a mere calling of words, which convey no meaning to the mind of the child as he reads. He is so much occupied with the mere mechanical effort, and his whole training in reading has been of such a nature, that he is unable to get at the meaning which lies back of the characters which appear on the printed page. Reading means the association of the idea with the word which represents it, and implies constant mental action

on the part of the reader. Taking the word in this, its proper sense, good reading is something rarely found in the school room. If then, we would have good readers, they must be properly trained from the beginning. We may do much to improve the older children, but the work must be right from the beginning, if we would have the result satisfactory.

PENMANSHIP.

As has been remarked, the little ones begin learning to write as soon as they enter school. The practice of printing has been entirely discarded. In the past it has been a useless accomplishment, being cast aside about as soon as acquired. The teaching of writing in the lowest primary schools takes two directions. First, the copying from the board of all words learned; second, a regular writing lesson each day which takes up some single letter. As a result of this training, children will write well on the slate at the end of the first year in school. Continuing this work, at the end of the third year the children will know perfectly the forms of all letters, both small and capital. There then remains simply the learning to hold a pen easily and firmly, and to guide it smoothly so as to execute the forms already in the mind. We do not at present send many good penmen from our schools. By means of proper training, which need not be done at the expense of anything else, we may send out scholars to whom rapid, easy and legible writing has become a matter of habit.

SPELLING.

Probably in no branch of education has more time been wasted than in the study of spelling. The ability to spell orally is well-nigh without value. We rarely have occasion to so spell a word, and the power to do so does not ensure a correct form of it when written. Common sense would seem to dictate that we should learn to spell by means of the same sense, sight, by which we must afterward judge

the correctness of our written word. Oral spelling has been substantially done away with in our schools. We attempt to teach first the words which our children are using every day, words whose meaning is known to them : secondly, to teach once for all the spelling of each new word added to their vocabulary. In this connection I desire to quote from the same author to whom I have previously referred. "It is reading which actually does the work with which the spelling book has been credited. When a scholar has learned to read with perfect facility, so that the printed page is just as instantly intelligible to him as spoken speech, and indeed a good reader can take in words silently from a printed page more than thrice as fast as by the ear, then the forms of the whole words of the language are as familiar to him as the letters of the alphabet, and he cannot spell a word in any other way than the tyranny of lexicographers and proof-readers has fastened upon him. No student of Greek, or of Latin, or of a modern tongue, uses a spelling book in acquiring the new language ; yet in precise proportion to his acquaintance with its literature he can spell it. It is so with the vernacular : and all spelling books are hindrances to learning to spell, they take up time which ought to be occupied in reading ; the method of learning what we, with curious perverseness, call English orthography."

GRAMMAR.

Most of the text books on this subject set out with the proposition that "A knowledge of English grammar enables us to speak and write the English language correctly." Of the truth of this proposition I have the gravest doubts. Even admitting its truth, the best educators of our State are ready to acknowledge that we have made serious mistakes in our application of it. Grammar is the science of language, and as such, as a technical study, should be deferred to a late stage of school life. Not till a child has gained a large acquaintance with his language, both in its spoken and written

forms, should he begin the study of grammar as a science. The almost universal detest with which children have regarded the study, to say nothing of its utter failure to produce the results which it proposed, should have led us long ago to question its usefulness in the form pursued. We are beginning the study of Language in our lowest primary rooms. The oral expression of thought is to come first, but it is to be closely followed by the written expression. They are to go forward hand in hand, until near the end of the grammar school course something of technical grammar may be attempted. The folly of wasting time in tracing the intricacies of English grammar with boys and girls who are utterly unable to write a page of decent English, seems self-evident.

ARITHMETIC.

In the study of arithmetic we seek for two ends. 1. The ability to cipher accurately and rapidly, i. e., to do correctly and quickly what I may call the rote work of the study, and 2. The ability to reason—to take hold of a problem—grasp its conditions, see clearly the relation which exists between its various quantities, and work to a successful solution. Probably no study occupies a larger share of our scholars' time, surely in no study are results less satisfactory. Not too little time, but too much, is already given to it, and I think we must look back to the child's earliest years in school for an explanation of the poor results which we find. Arithmetic is the science of number, of quantity. In nearly all of our primary school work we make it the science of figures. Endless study would fail to explain the relation existing between 4 and 2 the figures; the child's own senses soon enable him to perceive clearly the relation between | | | | and | | the numbers. In this, as in almost everything else, we cultivate one faculty, memory, to the exclusion of all the others. Having fed our scholars for years on figures and nothing else, we are completely surprised to find, when it is

too late, that they fail utterly in doing any work which requires thinking. "Having by our method induced helplessness, we straightway make helplessness a reason for our method." The evil of which I speak is well known to every observing teacher. It shows itself in the universal inclination of children to rush to slate and pencil, and straightway involve themselves in a wilderness of figures, whenever any practical work is offered them to do. I hope we have commenced to teach our little children the science of number in a way, that carefully followed out will give us much better results.

GEOGRAPHY.

The study of geography may be commenced to advantage during the fourth year of school life. Oral instruction for some time seems preferable to the use of the smaller text books. I have very frequently found children who could repeat fluently line after line of their book, who were utterly ignorant of the meaning of what they said. Children who could give in exact terms the definition of an isthmus or a peninsula, but who were unable to draw either, unable to describe them in any but text-book words, and who, going to school within a stone's throw of them, could point out neither. Mistaken ideas as to maps, that would be ludicrous if they were not so solemn, are constantly occurring. The difficulty here is of our own making. A little child cannot comprehend how a map can be made to represent a larger portion of the earth's surface than can be seen at one time. Where the proper training has been omitted, it is a work of great difficulty to imbue children with correct ideas. What we need in this study as in every other is less word teaching, and far more teaching of *things*. I have not as yet found time to discuss the matter of geography with our teachers. We have engaged however quite largely in black-board map drawing. As a means of fixing forms and positions it is an invaluable exercise: as a drawing exercise it possesses merit,

and lastly is a capital training exercise for classes which need discipline of this kind. The science of geography is a recent one. Its study in our schools has too long been the memorizing of a vast amount of trivial details valueless in themselves, and forgotten as soon as learned. In no study have teachers displayed less discrimination; in none is there a greater opportunity for the exercise of the teacher's art.

HIGH SCHOOL.

During the summer vacation a laboratory was fitted up in the basement of this building, in order that the classes in chemistry might perform their own experiments. Throwing entirely aside the question as to the advisability of teaching chemistry, so long as it remains in the course of study, this is the only way to handle it. As memorized from a text book the science has no attractions. By the actual everyday work at the bench the classes not only learn vastly more than they would otherwise do, but the exercise is of the greatest value in other directions. Each one of these young ladies and gentlemen becomes an investigator; his powers of doing and observing are trained; the truth which appears dull and uninteresting in print, is filled with light as it appears demonstrated by actual experiment; he is acquiring habits which will afterward be of the greatest value. I have mentioned this subject because it is a long step in the direction of true teaching, because it is in the direct line with everything that we ought to attempt in our other schools. A visit to the young chemists would well repay any one for the time consumed.

TEACHERS.

My thanks are due to the teachers of Canton for the interest and enthusiasm which they have manifested in their work. A merely selfish policy should induce every teacher to adopt the best methods possible. Good methods mean, after a time, easier work and better results. But more than this, school teaching soon degenerates into the most irksome

drudgery, unless kept alive by constant study of the ways and means. I would respectfully suggest to the committee the wisdom of taking such action as shall put an end forever to the idea that a change from a primary to a grammar school is a promotion. Prof. Brown well says that "We can better afford to have a wooden head over a college than over a primary school." A teacher requires three or four years to learn thoroughly the work of any one grade. No school demands higher gifts on the part of the teacher than the lowest primary, but so long as other positions command higher salaries, we shall have difficulty in retaining our primary teachers in their places. In all my work I have tried not to repress in the least any teacher's individuality. The principles of true teaching never vary; methods may be as different as the individuals employing them. Teachers have been encouraged to adopt such suggestions as they understood, and approved, but, at the same time, have been left entirely free to follow the old paths until they saw better for themselves.

TRAINING CLASS.

During the fall I gave a course of lessons to a class of young ladies who are desirous of fitting themselves for teachers. It is clearly to the advantage of the town to train home talent in such a way that vacancies in our corps of teachers may be filled by persons residing in the place. After the series of lessons closed, the members of the class engaged in the practical work of the school room under the direction of the regular teachers. Whenever the lowest primary school room contains fifty or more pupils, an assistant is an absolute necessity. As a result of the work done in the fall, we now have individuals competent to act as such assistants in case of need. Should new classes be formed, an opportunity will be offered to all graduates of our high school to learn something of the science of teaching.

CONCLUSION.

I should have preferred to have said much less in regard to the work which has been attempted during the year. Whatever right steps have been taken will, in the end, justify themselves. No amount of argument can bolster up the wrong ones. We are endeavoring to engage in the teaching of *things*, not *words*; to establish the reign of common sense in the school room. The methods of primary education which are being introduced into the schools of Canton are no experiments. They are founded on the science of mental philosophy, they have been tested for years by the greatest teachers in the world, and they are in use in the most progressive cities of our own and other lands. In their practical application mistakes may be made; of their correctness there can be no question. We do not pretend to have discovered any royal road to learning, yet some of the stumbling blocks can and should be removed from the way. We can and ought to make the lowest steps of the ladder easy to little feet; we can and ought to render school as little repugnant to the children as faithful study and good discipline will allow. Finally as I draw near to the end of this report, I realize more and more clearly how little has as yet been accomplished. I remember, however, that reorganizations require time, that they cannot be struck out at a blow. For the full development of the changes which have been inaugurated, three or four years will be required. They cannot be satisfactorily tested in a less time. Last of all I desire to express to the committee my appreciation of the kindness and courtesy which I have uniformly experienced at their hands.

Respectfully submitted,

G. I. ALDRICH,

Superintendent.

At a meeting of the School Committee of Canton, held Monday, March 17, 1879, the foregoing reports were adopted as the Annual Report of the School Committee.

Attest,

ARTHUR C. KOLLOCK, *Secretary.*

STATISTICS OF SCHOOLS.

SUB COMMITTEES.		Districts		Grade of Schools.		No. in School 1st Term.		Average Attendance.		Per cent. of Attendance		No. in School 2d Term.		Average Attendance.		Per cent. of Attendance		No. in School 3d Term.		Average Attendance.		Percent. of Attendance		Paid for Teaching.		Amount paid for Fuel and care of Rooms.		Amount paid for repairs and incidentals.		Printing, Supplies, and Supervision.		Visits between Sept. 1, 1878 and March 1, 1879.	
J. MASON EVERETT.	{ 1	High.	46	45	.98	54	52	.96	54	53	.99	\$1200 00	{ \$128 34	{ \$193 68	{ \$1623 34	{ 52	{ 278	{ 16	{ 507	{ 51	{ 64	{ 153	{ 112										
J. W. WATLES.		Gram.	36	41	.88	45	38	.84	46	40	.87	800 00												225 25	350 58								
F. R. BIRD.		Int. Prim.	53	61	.87	30	29	.96	29	27	.93	400 00												216 00	400 00								
V. J. MESSINGER.	{ 2	Mixed.	33	28	.85	25	22	.88	26	20	.77	400 00	{ 46 71	{ 120 93	{ 507	{ 51	{ 64	{ 153	{ 112														
		A & B Gram.	55	46	.83	58	54	.93	57	49	.86	800 00								46 71	120 93												
		C Grammar.	32	27	.84	41	39	.95	33	26	.79	360 00								46 71	120 93												
JESSE FENNO. JOHN EVERETT. THOMAS LONGERAN.	{ 3	D " A Primary.	31	27	.87	29	28	.96	38	32	.84	400 00	{ 523 05	{ 305 30	{ 507	{ 51	{ 64	{ 153	{ 112														
		B " " "	43	36	.83	48	43	.89	48	44	.91	360 00								523 05	305 30												
		C " " "	40	35	.87	45	42	.93	44	38	.86	360 00								523 05	305 30												
A. C. KOLLOCK.	{ 4	D " " "	80	56	.70	63	53	.84	53	36	.68	320 00	{ 150 05	{ 73 54	{ 112	{ 51	{ 64	{ 153	{ 112														
		Mixed.	24	18	.75	21	16	.76	22	18	.82	376 00								150 05	73 54												
		Int. Prim.	51	40	.78	25	19	.76	29	19	.65	557 00								150 05	73 54												
	{ 5	Mixed.	52	42	.80	38	32	.84	38	31	.81	360 00	{ 150 05	{ 73 54	{ 112	{ 51	{ 64	{ 153	{ 112														
		Int. Prim.	67	51	.76	59	52	.88	55	29	.83	376 00								150 05	73 54												
		Prim. Music.	35	28	.79	36	34	.94	34	28	.82	400 00								150 05	73 54												
	{ 6		57	46	.80	49	40	.71	45	34	.75	320 00																					
	{ 7		823	669	.81	766	679	.88	715	591	.82	\$9,735 00																					

Whole number of children between 5 and 15, 973.



